

### Letter to Speaker Requests Use of Video Conferencing Applications Such as Skype

GOP Leaders: “Rather than lagging behind, let’s move one step closer into the future of Congressional communications.”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In a letter sent yesterday to Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and House Administration Committee Chairman Robert Brady (D-PA), members of the House Republican leadership team requested that House members, maintaining cyber-security procedures, be allowed to use video conferencing software applications, such as Skype, to communicate with their constituents. Chief Deputy Whip Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), tasked to lead an effort by House Republicans to engage the American people and put forth a positive governing agenda, issued the following statement regarding the request.

*“The voices of the American people are not reaching those in charge in Washington so we must look for new ways to promote open dialogue,” said Congressman McCarthy (R-CA). “More Americans every day are using video to communicate, yet the House remains tied to outdated rules that make video conferencing difficult and expensive. The fact is we don’t need to sacrifice cyber security to open new lines of communication, like with Skype and other similar technology. If members of the House are to effectively represent the will of the people, we must keep pace with secure 21st century communications tools.”*

The text of letter can be found below:

April 19, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
H-232 Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Brady

Chairman, Committee on House Administration  
1309 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi & Chairman Brady,

Recent debates in Congress have underscored the urgent need for improved communication between the American people and their elected representatives. Both parties have indicated a desire to implement changes that would harness new technologies to address this challenge.

Democrats have stated a desire to use the internet to make Congress more open. Republicans, for our part, have put forth a congressional transparency agenda and made extensive use of direct media tools such as Twitter, and will soon be moving forward with an unprecedented new initiative of engagement with the American people.

New media technology has made it possible for citizens to enact more directly and efficiently than ever before with their elected leaders, and created the potential for unprecedented, real-time dialogue between the American people and Members of Congress. Significant strides have recently been made in the use of direct media by Members of Congress for such purposes. However, notable barriers remain. Among these barriers is the current House rule prohibiting Members of Congress from using certain video-conferencing software applications such as Skype.

As a low or no-cost video conferencing platform, Skype gives individuals the ability to communicate and interact directly with others who may be thousands of miles away, with the simple click of a mouse. Current House rules allow Members of Congress to use taxpayer funds to conduct traditional, often expensive, video teleconferencing activities with their constituents, but forbid them from using Skype – which is practically free – for such activities. We are certain that Skype, an increasingly relevant communication tool for Americans already widely used in the private sector, could be easily implemented in Congress in a manner that would not reduce the security of the House IT infrastructure. With safety and the sharing of ideas in mind, we therefore respectfully request that the use of Skype be permitted under House rules. Rather than lagging behind, let's move one step closer into the future of Congressional communications.

Thank you for your attention to this. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

John Boehner  
Republican Leader

Eric Cantor  
Republican Whip

Mike Pence  
Republican Conference Chairman

Cathy McMorris Rogers  
Republican Conference Vice Chair

Kevin McCarthy  
Chief Deputy Whip

Dan Lungren  
Ranking Member, House Administration Committee

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